

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of the application is requested.

Claims 1- 26 remain in the application.

In the section entitled "Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102" on page 2 of the above-mentioned Office action, claims 1-3, 6, 9, 16-18, 21, and 26 have been rejected as being anticipated by Koguchi et al. (US Pat. No. 6,082,263) under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) .

In the section entitled "Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103" on page 2-4 of the above-mentioned Office action, claims 4 and 19 have been rejected as being unpatentable over Koguchi et al. in view of Nüssel et al. (US Pat. No. 5,317,970) under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a); claims 5, 15, 20, and 25 have been rejected as being unpatentable over Koguchi et al. in view of Gydesen (US Pat. No. 5,644,986) under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a); claim 13 has been rejected as being unpatentable over Koguchi et al. in view of Nüssel et al. and further in view of Shin et al. (US Pat. No. 6,148,728) under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a); claims 7-8, 10-12, 14, and 22-24 have been rejected as being unpatentable over Koguchi et al. under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) .

As will be explained below, it is believed that the claims were patentable over the cited art in their original form and the claims have, therefore, not been amended to overcome the references.

Before discussing the prior art in detail, it is believed that a brief review of the invention as claimed, would be helpful.

Claims 1-2 call for, inter alia:

treating the printing form with a fluid clearing medium in a non-abrasive manner, irreversibly clearing all image information on a surface of the printing form.

Claim 3 calls for, inter alia:

treating the printing form with a liquid clearing medium in a non-abrasive manner, irreversibly clearing all image information on a surface of the printing form.

Claim 4 calls for, inter alia:

treating the printing form with a gaseous clearing medium in a non-abrasive manner, irreversibly clearing all image information on a surface of the printing form.

Claims 16-17 and 26 call for, inter alia:

a device for applying fluid clearing medium to the printing form in a non-abrasive manner, irreversibly clearing all image information on a surface of the printing form.

The Examiner has referred to column 4, lines 57-61 of Koguchi et al. as teaching a method and a device for clearing a re-

imageable printing form with a fluid clearing medium in a non-abrasive manner, irreversibly clearing all image information on the surface of a printing form (see the third paragraph on page 2 of the Office action). However, Koguchi et al. teach in column 4, lines 57-61 only the irreversible clearing of image information of the printing plate (restoring to the state where it bears thereon no image) by exposure of the printing plate to active light after being cleaned of ink. In fact, Koguchi et al. teach two different and separate steps of treating a printing plate. First, the ink but not the image information of a printing plate is cleared at an ink washing station 17 which is done by washing out ink adhering to the printing plate by the use of a hydrophobic petroleum solvent (a liquid) (see column 12, lines 44-47). However, this step of clearing does not clear all image information on the surface of the printing form but only clears ink adhering to the surface of the printing plate. Second, the printing plate is restored by the use of active light, namely the image information is erased. However, Koguchi et al. only teach the use of active light, but not the use of fluid (liquid or gaseous) clearing medium, as recited in the claims of the instant application, to erase the image information.

Applicants would like to clarify the terms "clearing" and "cleaning" in order to avoid any confusion. In the instant

application, "clearing" means erasing the image information and bringing the printing plate back into a neutral state (if ink is again applied, no image can be seen); "cleaning" means washing off the ink but the image information is still on the printing plate (one can make the information visible by applying ink again). In Koguchi et al., "clearing" means washing off ink whereas "restoring" means erasing the image information.

Since the Koguchi et al. reference teaches the use of active light for the step of "restoring" ("clearing" in the instant application), it is not a relevant prior art reference in view of the claims of the instant application, which are limited to a fluid (liquid or gaseous) clearing medium.

Nüssel et al. teach the use of plasma (ionized reactive gas) to remove particles (see abstract). However, the claims of the instant application are limited to "a non-abrasive manner." No particles are removed in the invention of the instant application. Therefore, the Nüssel et al. reference is also irrelevant.

"Abrasion" means wearing down by friction, e.g. under the action of hard particles (see e.g. <http://www.websters-online-dictionary.org/definition/english/ab/abrasion.html>). Nüssel

et al. teach the removal of particles, i.e. the abrasion of particles under the action of the plasma particles. The invention of the instant application teaches clearing without removing particles. The image information in the invention of the instant application is changed and restored (cleared) by chemical action of the liquid or gas used so that atoms or molecules are replaced but no particles (much larger than molecules) are removed (definition of "particle" see, e.g., <http://www.websters-online-dictionary.org/definition/english/ab/particle.html>).

The Examiner has stated in the first paragraph on page 5 of the Office action that the image information on a surface of a printing plate is inherently irreversible after end of printing. This statement is incorrect and conflicts with the Examiner's statement in the third paragraph on page 2 of the Office action. As can be clearly seen from column 4, lines 51-61 of Koguchi et al., as well as document EP 0 911 155 A1 (which is the parallel EP application to US 6,082,263 - Koguchi et al. - cited by the Examiner and which is mentioned on page 3 of the specification of the instant application), the printing plate can be irreversibly cleared of image information. EP 0 911 155 A1 teaches irreversible clearing of image information by the surface-wide exposure of UV light.

It is accordingly believed to be clear that none of the references, whether taken alone or in any combination, either show or suggest the features of Claims 1-4, 16-17, and 26. Claims 1-4, 16-17, and 26 are, therefore, believed to be patentable over the art and since all of the dependent claims are ultimately dependent on claims 1, 4, or 16, they are believed to be patentable as well.

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of claims 1-26 are solicited.

In the event the Examiner should still find any of the claims to be unpatentable, counsel would appreciate a telephone call so that, if possible, patentable language can be worked out.

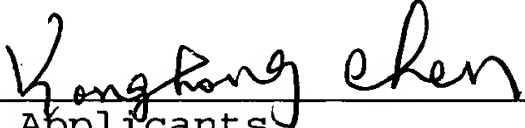
If an extension of time for this paper is required, petition for extension is herewith made. Please charge any fees which might be due with respect to 37 CFR Sections 1.16 and 1.17 to

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Respectfully submitted,

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